

## **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Advisory Board**

### **8.30.07 Meeting minutes**

#### **Town Hall Board of Selectmen's meeting room**

Present:

John McCormack, Chairman

George Infanti

Mel Reeve

Dave Roedel

Tom Wilson

Not present:

Jim Dannis

Al Hicks

Mike Trajano

Tom Brennan

Bill Parker, Director Community Development/TIF Administrator

Shirley Wilson, Recording Secretary

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John McCormack opened the meeting at 7:30AM.

#### **1. Review of Agenda & minutes**

J. McCormack reviewed the agenda with no additions from the Board and highlighted several key points from the July 12<sup>th</sup> minutes. G. Infanti made a motion to accept the minutes as written and all members were in agreement.

#### **2. Report from Don Zizzi,**

##### **Northeastern University Economic Development Partnership "Self-Assessment Survey" results**

D. Zizzi began by inquiring about Milford's experience and how we approached the exercise; who was involved and did we find the survey onerous or confusing? B. Parker replied that the survey was rigorous and best judgment was used on some things. While he did most of the work himself, Brad Vear assisted with the real estate data and Mike Trajano answered the school related questions; however, he was the only person to input data through the PC. This Board did review the survey, as a group. D. Zizzi explained that this was not a one-time exercise and that the real value in the partnership between CURP and the private sector was that there would be a continuous improvement loop. Changes to answers can be made at any time just by logging in. Each change that is made will bring about changes to the database, and will affect the results. B. Parker added that adult education was now going to be offered at the high school, so that answer will have to be changed. J. McCormack said that we could possibly make a provision to meet quarterly, particularly with the Board of Selectmen, to review and update the information, saying this is what we've learned and this is what we can do. D. Zizzi then stated that the burden on Milford is not over; it is a two-way street when we recruit the communities as partners. We'll be sharing your information as well as "the Milford Advantage." J. McCormack noted that our new real estate agents will hopefully be more proactive and progressive using whatever information we can provide. Some of the ideas cross over, so that they also could sell the "Milford Advantage."

D. Zizzi stated that the comparison group, now up to fifty-two partner communities, is predominantly from Massachusetts with a few groups now in Maine and Connecticut. Not all have completed their surveys, so the results may change. The value to Milford in terms of querying against other groups will grow; this is a global competition. Milford came in early due, to our progressive nature, but CURP is on target for one hundred partners by year's end and this will be a much richer comparison. D. Zizzi encouraged each Board member to run their own queries from their own home using the password and to play around with the results. J. McCormack inquired if Don had learned anything from the early stages of the survey. D. Zizzi replied that competition in New England is very aggressive and just may come down to these results. The survey only tells us where we are at one particular moment in time and it can change just as quickly. These results give community leadership a chance to say let's look at that red flag and determine if it is an environmental circumstance or if it is something that can be addressed

at Town Hall level. This is a self-assessment, not a report card. D. Zizzi then highlighted several of the sections and discussed the results.

*Section 1: Access to Customers/Markets*

D. Zizzi addressed the survey results by saying that many of the questions are items well within Milford's realm, others are not. For example, rail service; Milford has rail in town, but does it serve the industrial community? This is not something directly under the town's control, but working with industry, it is something the town could do something about. Other things like highway access and airports; they are what they are.

*Section 2: Agglomeration*

Milford can certainly think about actively enlisting local firms, and state agencies to become a resource and to promote Milford's strengths. Chambers and other business groups do regular promotions for the community. The town could reach out to the prominent firms who have grown here and utilize those who could promote the "Milford Advantage" while touting why their businesses are here. J. McCormack referenced Hendrix. D. Zizzi said that state agencies, like DRED, should be contacted to involve Milford in their marketing. Your state executive counsel representatives should include Milford when talking about and promoting southern New Hampshire. These strategies don't cost anything, but can lead to results. J. McCormack stated that these ideas could hopefully be highlighted in conjunction with the Grubb and Ellis marketing. B. Parker said that we are still at an early stage of developing our marketing plan. D. Zizzi said this was the purpose of the study, to help develop that policy with the guidance of your partners and CURP.

- Does Milford have a formal debriefing process with firms that choose to locate here in Milford, or for that matter, conversely and if so, are their responses used to our advantage? Aggressive communities don't wait, they call and ask developers why they did or didn't choose their locations. D. Zizzi then provided a DVD with presentations filmed by his staff for the community partners and noted that the first of two parts talked about how to attract and retain firms.
- Does Milford have a process for contacting existing firms? Communicating with existing businesses is one of the best ways to grow a manufacturing base. J. McCormack again referenced Hendrix, a leading industry that could help with giving us an edge.
- Are complaints from community businesses followed up to ensure that problems were not only fixed, but how they were addressed? Did the procedure get in the way? Does Milford focus on those industries and businesses in town that generate wealth and jobs, and target them, up front, to keep a running file on how they are doing? Not to discount retail, food or other commercial establishments in town, but most job growth comes from existing industry or offshoots.

*Section 4: Labor*

G. Infanti commented that the labor market in this area is a concern; there are either not enough skilled people here to fill the jobs we have, or the skilled labor can't afford to live here. D. Zizzi said that the labor market is still an issue for companies considering relocating to the southern NH area and workforce is still the number one factor for setting up businesses in New England. Which workforce training resources do you interact with; state employment agencies, local high schools, adult education, vo-tech schools? G. Infanti explained the rotation of high school students at local businesses. D. Zizzi said these services can do so much for communities and stated that Milford should also focus on the State Office of Employment Services. D. Zizzi brought up available co-op programs and added that the vo-tech schools were very light on their feet and responsive. They are great resources to match supply with demand. A discussion followed. D. Zizzi reiterated that involvement in this program engages not only the town hall, but the school district, businesses and the Chamber of Commerce. J. McCormack said that strength of unions was also a factor in business relocation. B. Parker noted that there was concern with the school's non-teaching personnel becoming unionized within the past three years. D. Zizzi said that this didn't really seem to be an issue in Milford.

*Section 5: Municipal Process*

D. Zizzi said that much of this section dealt with industry sensitivity and a marketing program, which you're undertaking at this time. Milford is working on the task of policy development and can begin by building a specific marketing program based on existing core strengths. Milford has plenty of strengths that need to be highlighted and local business folks can be engaged to quote, and in turn, promote this "Milford Advantage." Some of the factors that contribute to the "Milford Advantage" are that Milford is a nice community with a good image, especially at the entrances to town and the day to day municipal responsibilities seem to run well.

D. Zizzi stated that he thought the town did very well regarding new construction and better than average in special permitting. Milford did no worse than the median responses with respect to the zoning and appeals process. However, it was surprising to see how quickly some of the comparison groups were getting through the process for existing construction and reuse of existing structures. The purpose of this type analysis is to ask if the median timeframe is really five to eight weeks. It's not for anyone to cast dispersions or to focus on something being done wrong, it's to flag the answer and ask if it would be in Milford's interest to address or explore the issue further. B. Parker said he always heard that Milford was a fairly easy town to deal with as far as getting through the planning process and expressed concern with the results. G. Infanti said that the question took the process right through to occupation and our timeframe would be realistic, especially trying to get the trade workers in. B. Parker added that the timeframe also depended on financing and offered to go back through the files to research the major projects and get a better timeline for an average project. D. Zizzi said he agreed from his regional planning days that Milford was very good to work with and our processes were well expedited; so he also was surprised at the results showing thirteen weeks. A little more investigation might show that we may need to tweak our answers somewhat. D. Roedel inquired about Milford's Planning Board process and a brief discussion followed. B. Parker noted that there was continuous involvement with planning staff throughout the entire process. G. Infanti also noted that outside consultants, could at times, hold up the process as compared to communities that had engineers on staff. D. Zizzi said that then becomes internal policy; certain priority projects could be expedited and noted that community development policy was also was a question on the survey. J. McCormack inquired if traffic issues held up the Walgreens development and asked if the developer had any comments on our process. B. Parker said that overall, Walgreens was fairly pleased with the process which took four months of regular meetings to get through the process.

*Section 6: Quality of Life*

D. Zizzi noted that a high percentage of Milford's population and workforce were well educated, crime was low and the median price of a single family home was low, which added to Milford's strengths. B. Parker noted that some residents don't consider housing to be a strength as they feel Milford has more than their fair share of affordable housing, which has turned into more of a regional issue. A discussion ensued. D. Zizzi said that the population will define the philosophy of the town, but at the same time boards like this can educate the people and make them understand one on one.

*Section 10: Access to Information*

D. Zizzi said the final section dealt with the economic development website. Knowing that Milford is working on the website, he emailed a printout to Bill from a private sector partner with thoughts on what a relocation specialist looks for on a community website. When you are thinking about what information to invest in your website, the checklist is very important, making the point that the internet is a cheap, easy, anonymous way to obtain information for relocation. The checklist will take you through what businesses look for; information, maps, and demographics. Data goes stale quickly, so like this process, the website is not a one-time deal. The information has to be kept current and updated regularly, particularly when our survey results change. You should then go back in and update your

survey answers to see how a current website affects the “Milford Advantage.” Again this is a continuous improvement process.

D. Zizzi summarized the results by saying that this report should be used to ask yourselves questions about what Milford does or doesn’t do and to question your relationships with both the schools and the state. These relationships cost little other than time. Milford also has more work to do with the population in terms of spreading the word. J. McCormack stated that the Board appreciated Don’s thoughts and ideas; we would try to engage our Select Board more fully and work in some of the points made today with our new marketing firm as there are many crossover points. D. Zizzi said that we should get Grubb & Ellis involved, to help develop the policy and program and to promote the “Milford Advantage.” Another advantage of our partnership is that the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NIAOP) is asking for data from our partnering communities; at some point they will learn about Milford. They also have done a prospectus which will be distributed to the partnering communities. D. Zizzi again noted that you don’t have to redo the whole survey every time, just go in and change certain responses and click to run a new report. You’ll have more communities to query against and will be able to get the latest information and comparisons. J. McCormack said there may even be some particularly constructive aha moments from other communities that say this is something we’re doing that you can benefit from and use. D. Zizzi said his staff will be collecting “best practices” on a regular basis that will be distributed to all the partners. One of the things we impose on you as a partner will be to share with us, so we can distribute the lessons learned and what worked and what did not work. You’ll be receiving regular reports from us, through Bill Parker. We’re looking at a long term relationship.

J. McCormack concluded the presentation by saying that we learned a few things today, in that this is a process and by working in conjunction with Grubb & Ellis, we will be able to take it further. T. Wilson said he found Don Zizzi’s comment interesting that between Hendrix and Hitchiner, the two companies have been here for a hundred years and we should find out why. B. Parker added that some very good ideas were brought up.

### **3. Update on Hendrix Wire and Cable**

T. Wilson told the Board that Marmon’s environmental department did not recommend building on the former police property. Based on a September 2006 report, the proposed site is in the middle of an OU-2 plume and the proposed treatment is to now monitor natural tinuation, which means that the original treatment did not work but over time the site should get better. T. Wilson offered a copy of the report to the Board and a brief discussion followed. B. Parker clarified that the OU-2 plume was the contamination of the aquifer underneath and said that he could ask about the status at next week’s meeting with the EPA. T. Wilson also noted that the whole area on Old Wilton Rd from Elm St over to 101 is not in a floodplain unlike everything in the surrounding area. J. McCormack inquired if it would be possible to expand on their existing site. T. Wilson replied that they have been challenged with a number of things and that could certainly be a possibility. Expansion on the Brox property would not be an option because spending 1.8 million dollars for a road would definitely change the cost/benefit and make it a deal killer. T. Wilson then described more of the molding process and the direction of the proposed expansion. J. McCormack asked if we could provide any help with the existing site and a lengthy discussion followed. D. Roedel noted that the role of this Board was for the Brox property and support for the current site should come from the community and the town hall.

### **4. Brox marketing agreement**

B. Parker said that he and John met with Grubb & Ellis and they are okay with all our revisions to the marketing agreement; however, they are holding firm with the 8% fee with the amount of work and effort going into this. J. McCormack said that based on all things considered, this is a fair compromise. D. Roedel added that the percentage is not such a big deal if they do what they say and the advantage

will be getting this property on the tax role. B. Parker said that if the committee was in agreement, he will forward a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen for their next meeting. The Board was in agreement. D. Roedel asked if there would be a specific time frame determined, with a signed contract in place. Development is moving westward and we need to be ready.

#### **5. Update on Brox property wetlands delineation**

B. Parker explained that he obtained two cost estimates for the north portion of the Brox property involving lots 38/4, 38/5, and 38/5-1 for wetlands delineation. Meridian, who did the Hendrix survey came in at \$3,000 to \$4,000 and Clough Harbor, who did the original Brox survey came in at \$2600. They would like to get going on this so it can be done in the fall when the trees are down, but still enough vegetation to look at. J. McCormack asked if the same individual would be doing the work. B. Parker replied he didn't know, but new GPS technology would be used and noted that the edge of wet can vary from five to ten feet. D. Roedel inquired if the delineations would be sent to the state and actually marked. B. Parker said the delineation would only show how much useable land we would have on the Brox piece. A discussion on the impact of beaver dams and culverts followed.

#### **6. Other business**

**Meeting Date:** The next meeting date was scheduled for September 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 AM.

**TIF District expansion:** B. Parker said the timing is good for expansion of the district boundaries and he will have more for the next meeting

**Website development:** Will give an update at the next meeting

**Marketing efforts:** B. Parker suggested that this group meet with the Chamber of Commerce and said that May Balsama is trying to regenerate interest and involvement with community government. We could invite the president, Cliff Harris to the next meeting. A discussion followed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50AM.

#### **To do items:**

- ⇒ Submit recommendation to BOS for Grubb & Ellis marketing agreement
- ⇒ Feedback and encouragement for Hendrix expansion on existing site
- ⇒ Website (Sept '07)
- ⇒ TIF District expansion
- ⇒ Wetlands delineation of Brox industrial property
- ⇒ Invite Cliff Harris, Chamber of Commerce president, to next meeting
- ⇒ Economic Development Self Assessment survey follow up
  - ⇒ Application timeline: Research major projects and determine average timeline
  - ⇒ Adult Education: Contact Mike Trajano

#### **Continuing items:**

- ⇒ Brox industrial property
  - ⇒ Site presentation/clean up
  - ⇒ Revisit land prices
- ⇒ Maintain an on-going progress file.
- ⇒ Meet with developers.
- ⇒ State support
  - ⇒ Ten year plan for access to the property
  - ⇒ Job creation within two-year periods
- ⇒ On-going contact with Land Quest.
- ⇒ Update on DRED funding